

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 SAM-01 SAB-01 IO-10 TRSE-00 AID-05 A-01

OPR-02 SY-05 OC-05 CCO-00 SCS-03 SCA-01 SCCT-01 /097 W

----- 127599

O R 301442Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5034

DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMCONSUL JERSUALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USCINCEUR

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STUTTART FOR ELG

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PGOV, LE, PLO

SUBJ: CAN LEBANON CATCH THE GOLD RING?

REF: BEIRUT 8221

1. ASSERTION EVEING JUN 29 BY PREMIER-DESIGNATE RASHID KARAME THAT "POSITIVE SOLUTIONS WHICH. . . WILL LEAD TO FORMATION OF A GOVT" HAD BEEN ACHIEVED AND THAT NEW GOVT COULD BE ANNOUNCED JUN 30 (FBIS JN292020Y) HAS ONCE MORE BROUGHT SOME HOPE TO TRAUMATIZED LEBANESE. SPEAKING AFTER LENGTHY MEETING WITH PRES FRANGIE, INTERPRETATION ACCORDED TO KARAME'S REMARKS IS THAT PROGRESS TOWARD OVERCOMING PHALANGIST INSISTENCE UPON INCLUSION IN CABINET WAS MADE. BUT MOST LEBANESE, WHO HAVE RESPONDED FOR LAST SEVERAL WEEKS TO POLITICAL SITUATION WHICH FLUCTUATED ALMOST DAILY BETWEEN DEEP DEPRESSION AND WISHFUL OPTIMISM ARE NOW IN STATE OF VIRTUAL SHOCK AND WILL HAVE TO HEAR ACTUAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF CABINET BEFORE ALLOWING THEIR HOPES TO BE REKINDLED.

2. TWO VITALLY IMPORTANT MEETINGS WERE SCHEDULED FOR MORNING OF JUN 30. FIRST, FURTHER CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN KARAME AND FRANGIE, IS STILL CONTINUING WITH PARTICIPATION OF OTHER LEADING POLITICAL FIGURES INCLUDING PIERRE GEMAYEL. SECOND SESSION OF PHALANGE PARTY POLITICAL BUREAU, CONCLUDED ITS DELIBERATIONS THIS MORNING BUT NO RPT NO WORD REGARDING DECISIONS TAKEN HAS YET LEAKED OUT. MOST KNOWLEDGEABLE OBSERVERS WHOM WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO CONTACT BELIEVE THAT UNBRIDLED OPTIMISM IS PREMATURE AT LEAST.

3. SAEB SALAM, CLOSE ALLY OF KARAME, TOLD DCM MORNING JUN 30 THAT DETERIORATING SECURITY CONDITIONS THROUGHOUT SUNDAY, JUN 29 HAD COME VERY CLOSE TO DERAILING INTENSIVE POLITICAL EFFORTS WHICH FINALLY MOVED SITUATION TOWARD KARAME'S STATEMENT IN EARLY EVEING. CONDITIONS ON GROUND, WHICH CONTINUE VERY BAD, COULD YET UNDERMINE CONSULTATIONS AIMED AT RESOLVING GOVT CRISIS, ALTHOUGH SALAM IS MILDLY HOPEFUL. THOSE PAPERS WHICH APPEARED JUN 30 WERE UNANIMOUS IN DESCRIBING SUNDAY AS DAY OF HELL. CLASHES AND EXPLOSIONS, WHICH HAD HERE-  
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TOFORE BEEN GEOGRAPHICALLY LIMITED AND CONFINED TO HOURS OF DARKNESS, CONTINUED MORE OR LESS UNABATED THROUGHOUT DAY AND INTO EVENING JUN 29/30. DURING SUNDAY AFTERNOON, HEAVY FIRING WAS HEARD CLEARLY IN RAS BEIRUT AND FIRING ASSOCIATED WITH FUNERAL IN AIN MREISSE (ADJACENT TO EMBASSY) DREW RESPONSE FROM MEMBER OF EMBASSY POLICE GUARD. FORTUNATELY, REMAINDER OF GUARD DID NOT RPT NOT JOIN IN AND INCIDENT WAS CONTAINED BUT FIRING CONTINUED NEAR HOLIDAY INN AND PERHAPS

ALONG BLISS STREET. EXPLOSIONS (BOTH BOMBINGS AND SHELLING) WERE HEARD INTO EARLY MORNING JUN 30 AS APARTMENT BUILDINGS, BOUTIQUES AND FLOWER SHOPS WERE ATTACKED. AS OF 1000Z, GOL SECURITY OFFICIALS REPORT SITUATION REMAINS BAD IN MOST OF CITY, WITH HEAVY FIGHTING CONTINUING IN SHIAH, AIN RUMANNEH, FURN ASH SHUBAK AND NEARBY NEIGHBORHOODS.

4. OVER WEEKEND, PHALANGE MILITIA ADOPTED MORE OFFENSIVE TACTICS THAN PREVIOUSLY FOLLOWED. RESPONDING TO SHELLING AND FIRE FROM VARIOUS PREDOMINANTLY-MOSLEM AREAS BORDERING ON ASHRAFIYEH, PHALANGE STRIKE FORCES ATTACKED QUARANTINA AND RAS AN NABEH (NEAR CORNICHE MAZRA') . WE DO NOT RPT NOT KNOW WHETHER PHANLANGIST RESERVES WERE BROUGHT IN FROM MOUNT LEBANON TO HELP FORM OFFENSIVE UNITS. IN QUARANTINA, PHALANGE OCCUPIED AREA FOR SOME HOURS BEFORE WITHDRAWING. WE HAVE RELIABLE REPORT THATN PRIOR TO THEIR DEPARTURE, THEY COLLECTED SEVERAL TRUCK-LOADS OF WEAPONS AND MUNITIONS WHICH WERE REMOVED TO ASHRAFIYEH. IN VIEW OF REPORTED SHORTAGES OF SOME KINDS OF AMMUNITION AMONG PHALANGE, REPROVISIONING CANNOT BE EXCLUDED AS A PRIME MOTIVE FOR THIS AND SIMILAR OPERATIONS. OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS AGAINST RAS AN NABEH AND ENVIRONS APPARENTLY TOOK PLACE WITH ACTIVE ASSISTANCE OF CHAMOUNIST MILITIA WHICH JOINED THE STRUGGLE FOLLOWING THE SHELLING OF CHAMOUN'S NLP HEADQUARTERS.

5. ACCORDING TO RELIABLE INFORMATION, PHALANGE SUFFERED SUBSTANTIAL CASUALTIES BOTH FROM INCREASING FEROCITY OF FIGHTING AND AS RESULT OF OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS, THERE IS, CONSEQUENTLY, GENERAL DISINCLINATION AMONG MANY PHALANGISTS TO ACCEPT POLITICAL SOLUTION AND STANDDOWN ON HEELS THSES SACRIFICES AND SOME COMMENTATORS ARE CONCERNED THAT PHALANGIST LEADER, PIERRE GEMAYEL, WILL NOT RPT NOT BE ABLE TO ACCEPT COMPROMISE POLITICAL SOLUTION IN FACE OF INTENSE PRESSURES FROM HIS FOLLOWERS.

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6. ALMOST ALL ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY IN LEBANON IS AT STANDSTILL JUNE 30, BUT DOUBTFUL PHENOMENON CAN BE WHOLLY ATTRIBUTED TO GENERAL STRIKEPROCLAIMED BY LEFTISTS. STREETS AROUND CAPITAL ARE MORE DESERTED THAN VETERAN MEMBERS OF EMBASSY STAFF CAN EVER REMEMBER AND MAJORITY OF FSLs WERE UNABLE TO REACH WORK. BEIRUT AIRPORT CONTINUES TO FUNCTION, BUT PRESS HAS ANNOUNCED THAT AIR FRANCE, CYPRUS AIRWAYS AND SEVERAL OTHER LINES HAVE CANCELLED FLIGHTS FOR MOMENT. AIRPORT FUEL RESERVES WERE RUN DOWN TO EMERGENCY STOCKS LATE FRIDAY OR EARLY SATURDAY AND SOME PANAM FLIGHTS (707S) HAVE OVERFLOWN FOR TECHNICAL REASONS. PANAM 747S OPERATING THROUGH BEIRUT WITH CONSIDERABLE UNFILLED SEATS. OTHER AIRLINES, HOWEVER, APPARENTLY HAVE MORE SUBSTANTIAL BOOKINGS AS ARABS, PARTICULARLY FROM SAUDI ARABIA

AND THE GULF ARE REPORTEDLY FLEEING LEBANON IN LARGE NUMBERS. AT THIS TIME, AIRPORT ROAD IS OPEN RPT OPEN.

7. AS FAR AS WE CAN DETERMINE, ALL AMCITS SAFE. EMBASSY ADVISE TOALL AMCITS REMAINS AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED.

8. COMMENT: THERE ARE CLEARLY INDICATIONS OF BROADER RECOGNITION THAT TIME HAS COME (IF NOT PASSED) FOR ENDING POLITICAL CRISIS. RISING DEATH TOLL AND FURTHER DETERIORATION OF PUBLIC SECURITY MUST BE EXERCISING PRESSURE ON POLITICAL LEADERS TO COME TO TERMS. RELATIVELY OPTIMISTIC STATEMENT LAST EVENING MUST BE GIVEN WEIGHT, SINCE KARAME HAS THUS FAR BEEN RELATIVELY CLOSE-MOUTHED RE PREDICTIONS. MUFTI KHALED HASSAN YESTERDAY MADE STATEMENT INDICATING THAT "ISOLATION" OF PHALANGE IS NOT RPT NOT SUNNI MOSLEM OBJECTIVE, AND THIS MAY FACILITATE TASK OF MODERATING PHALANGIST POSITION. SHIITE LEADER IMAM MUSA SADR CONTINUES HIS HUNGER STRIKE, WHICH IS RALLYING SUPPORT OF HIS FOLLOWERS IN BEIRUT, THE BEKA VALLEY AND SOUTH LEBANON. FINALLY, SYRIAN FONMIN KHADDAM HAS REAPPEARED IN BEIRUT, POSSIBLY INDICATING THAT SARG DEEMS CONDITIONS PROPITIOUS FOR POLITICAL SETTLEMENT. AGAINST THESE FAVORABLE SIGNS, HOWEVER, MUST BE BALANCED EXTENT TO WHICH CLASHES HAVE DEVELOPED MOMENTUM OF THEIR OWN AS BITTERNESS AND INTRANSIGENCE OF ALL PARTIES GROWS. WHILE KARAME MAY BE SUCCESSFUL AT LAST IN FORMING CABINET, THERE ARE FEWER AND FEWER LEBANESE WILLING TO PREDICT THAT  
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MERE FACT OF NEW GOVT WILL BE SUFFICIENT TO END CLASHES. EVEN THE MOST OPTIMISTIC BELIEVE THAT SEVERAL DAYS MINIMUM WOULD BE REQUIRED TO RESTORE SEMBLANCE OF PUBLIC ORDER, WHILE OTHER SUGGEST THAT NEW CABINET HAS ALREADY BEEN TOO LONG DELAYED TO WRITE FINIS TO TROUBLES. AS LEBANON IS CAUGHT IN WHAT HAS BEEN THUS FAR UNRELIEVED TAILSPIN INTO DEEPENING CHAOS, BURNING QUESTION IS WHETHER POLITICAL LEADERSHIP CAN NOW REGAIN CONTROL OF EVENTS. PROCLAMATION OF CABINET WOULD CONSTITUTE A FIRST STEP ON ROAD BACK TO "NORMALCY".  
GODLEY

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